
Subject: Chair Felicia Marcus and State Water Board

From: CHamerstad@aol.com [<mailto:CHamerstad@aol.com>]

Sent: Thursday, January 02, 2014 12:10 PM

To: commentletters

Subject: Chair Felicia Marcus and State Water Board

State Water Board,

As you know, water has become the most precious natural resource in the state of California. As our population grows and the demand for water increases for both human consumption and agricultural use, water has been withheld from supporting the over 500 species of wildlife including 55 fish species, of these 13 are afforded protection which are dependant on adequate water flow to survive and flourish.

The Bay Delta forms the West Coast's largest estuary and is the migration path for salmon, steelhead and sturgeon traveling to and from their home streams to the ocean. And the Bay-Delta is dying.

Water from 40% of California's land mass flows through the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Delta. Historically, salmon populations in the millions were spawning in the rivers flowing into the Delta including over 400,000 in the San Joaquin River system. But in recent years, that figure for the San Joaquin River system has declined to less than 2,000 because a loss of habitat and adequate water flows. Salmon are a keystone species, providing food for other animals including humans and transport nutrients from the ocean to upland habitats. More than 100 species are dependent on salmon.

The commercial salmon fishery in California is on the brink of collapse with populations so low in 2008 and 2009 the commercial salmon season had to canceled resulting in the loss of millions of dollars of income to the state.

Natural flows through the system have been altered to provide up to 6.8 million acre feet (2.2 trillion gallons) of water per year for agriculture and municipal uses. Through better management of snow melt, water efficient irrigation practices, replacing lower value, water intensive crops with higher value, water efficient crops, and retiring some long term unsustainably productive land, water recycling, California could grow more food with less water.

At least half or 50% of the San Joaquin River's natural unimpeded flow should reach the Delta during the first six months of each year. Only 33% unimpaired flow is grossly inadequate. Flows in the summer and fall should be sufficient to support fish, other wildlife, water quality and recreation. Low river flows impede fish passage, concentrate pollutants, raise water temperatures, decrease dissolved oxygen and eliminate migratory clues for fish.

I urge to support a Bay-Delta Water Quality Plan which will restore the Delta and the many wildlife species dependant on adequate water flows.

Sincerely,

Chuck Hammerstad
Conservation Committee Chairman
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"If we care for the fish, the fish will reward us in return"